Iku's Nervousness, Asako's Joy, and a Date-Not-Date in Kantō

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Iku's Nervousness, Asako's Joy, and a Date-Not-Date in Kantō

by lefemmerouge2

Summary

Iku and Asako have their first date-not-date. It is supposed to be a test run before each of them ask out the men they have crushes on. Particularly, Asako wants to help Iku so that she is prepared when she asks out Dojo, her "prince." After leaving the Kantō library base, rain threatens to ruin the get-together. Even so, Asako and Iku continue to enjoy each other's company, whether traveling to a cafe which serves tea, a mall, the park, and many other places across the city...

Notes

Happy start of Kindness Week! This week, which begins on November 10, encourages everyone to make a "declaration of kindness and charity," including by donating "books, food, or clothes to local communities and pledging to empathize with other people." In the case of this fic, it is all about kindness between Iku and Asako, as they come together on this date-not-date.

This fic picks up where my last Library War fic (within the inspirations section), left off. Otherwise, like my other two fics published for Flufftober this year, particularly "Coming Home… For Good?: Elena's Unexpected (Royal) Roommate"" and "A First Time for Everything?: Asako, Iko, and Their Affections," which fulfilled their "Make it Platonic!" challenge, particularly the "Alt 8. Moving in Together" (first fic listed) and "Alt 7: Can I kiss you?" (second fic listed) prompts, this fic falls under saffic fics. Those fics "focus on the relationships between women," including "gen stories that focus on other strong female bonds such as friendship, sister, rival and mother-daughter relationships." Like my last fic, Asako refers to Asako Shibasaki. Another fic for Flufftober, which I published this year, entitled "To Be Moon Girl or Not: That is the Question," is much more romantic than this one.

Furthermore, this fic fulfills the aforementioned Flufftober 2025 "Make it Platonic!" challenge, particularly the "Alt 6. First Date" prompt. I will publish fics for the two other prompts for this challenge ("Alt 9. Planning the Perfect Proposal" and "Alt 10. And They Lived Happily Ever After") but with *other* fandoms.

There is no doubt that this fic is fluff, i.e. feel-good, pleasant works with affects between two-plus characters, in a romantic or non-romantic relationship. More than that, I enjoyed writing this and bringing Iku and Asako together. The beauty of this fic is that I can talk about romantic relationships almost in the abstract, without directly showing them. This is kind of

like what Sailor Moon does when the Sailor Scouts talk together about crushes, but the people they are crushing on aren't always shown.

Otherwise, QPR partners, otherwise known as QPP, can call themselves zucchinis, "marshmallow," or "mallowfriend." Others use the term "squish" (i.e. a platonic crush), or terms like called plush, squash, or crish, although the latter isn't as common. LGBTQIA+ Wiki which goes onto say that some call QPR a "quirky relationship" or "qplatonic relationship." LGBTQIA+ Wiki calls QPR an "intimate, non-romantic committed relationship" going against cultural norms which dictate, in many modern Western societies, that "romantic partners are more physically affectionate and more emotionally close than friends are."

Like my other fics, this has been cross-posted on Squidge World, Wattpad, Quotev, and Asianfanfiction.

As always, comments are welcome.

Update on 5/8/26: A revised/expanded version of this work, which added 255 words, to a word count of 2,156, an expansion of about 13.4%, making the fic even stronger than the original, was posted on on Squidge World. I'm glad I revisited it. I also changed the summary slightly as well. I had a lot of fun revising this work and would love to write more works for these two women (maybe they'd become a couple ultimately) if I have time this year.

See the end of the work for more notes

- Inspired by A First Time for Everything?: Asako, Iko, and Their Affections by lefemmerouge2
- Inspired by a deleted work
- Inspired by Print on Demand by Gramarye
- Inspired by Zombie Wars by AnimeShipper12, notcompletelysane
- Inspired by Six clues by Naco

Iku was nervous. It was a weekend, so she didn't have work. She had wracked her brain deciding *what* she was going to wear. It didn't help that Asako was her roommate. This may have not been an issue normally. In this case it was because… she was going on a date-not-date *with her!* It had been an idea she had thrown out there after they finally decided to express their compassion, affection, respect, and platonic feeling, for one another with cheek and forehead kisses. Smooches on the mouth, or anything intimate, had been *forbidden*. They'd even set ground rules. Pecks on the back of the hand were allowed, but neither one had done that. Even so, they enjoyed their casual kisses as friends.

Before they left their shared bedroom, they kissed one another on their cheeks. This was something that they had started doing *every day* ever since Iku suggested it and Asako agreed to it, to Iku's surprise. As it went on, day after day, each one felt that these acts of sweet affection gave them the support and love for one another they needed. They showed how much they meant and cared for one another, and strengthened their emotional bond. Perhaps there was more to it, but they kept it quiet. They were aware that any of their work colleagues found out, it could spell disaster for both of them.

They had a plan. First they'd go to a cafe, then the movies. After that, Iku would buy a gift for Atsushi Dojo. Iku would ask him out on a date and present the gift to him at the end. It was nothing more than a friendly outing. Asako didn't mind acting blunt, making sarcastic jokes, or sharing her true feelings around Iku. She didn't have to hide this from her since Iku was a flawed woman herself. She could trust her, more than anyone.

Some would call their emotional connection with one another a "womance," a word which referred to a strong, deep, and meaningful non-sexual relationship between two or more women. Such a word would be accurate. Iku and Asako had a tight-knit bond, seeing themselves as kindred spirits of sorts, appreciating each other, and acting chummy. Occasionally they'd be physically and emotional intimate, although never in a sexual way. This was all new for both of them. Hugging and holding hands was fine, and so was cheek kissing. Anything sexual was *out of bounds*. They didn't know the term, and it wasn't really used within Japan, but others might have deemed their relationship "queerplatonic." In any case, their close bond certainly involved a level of commitment from both of them and defied any societal morays or expectations.

Their friendly outing began without a hitch. No one paid them any mind, especially since other women on Kantō Library Base did the same. Asako was dazzling, with a white parasol. Iku looked more dower, in more earthy colors. They soon made their way to a nearby cafe. They made it inside just in time. A torrent of rain poured down outside, something that the meteorologist, Martin Masseltoffer, who had recently moved to Japan from the U.S., had not predicted.

Iku sighed. They sat down at a small chabudai, as an attendant gave them a menu of the tea served there. They both chose the amber, chamomile tea, since it was in the insignia of the Library Defense Force (LDF) after all. While the cafe, unsurprisingly, did not have books in open view, due to a far of a possible raid by the Media Betterment Committee, they had some newspapers available. Asako read the recent rag, which took the view, sadly, of the MBC,

praising them for their recent efforts. She knew full well that it was propaganda. Even so, even these publications can be used to the LDF's advantage.

"What's wrong, Iku?" Asako asked. Her friend complained. "This weather is dreadful." The attendant came in only seconds later with their tea. He added something after overhearing their conversation. "Oh, it's like this every year. I've been here for 50 years and I'm almost used to it now." As he walked away, he added, "enjoy the tea. I'll be around if you need anything else." Iku and Asako smiled back. They both drank the beverages he had provided and savored the sweet taste. All the worries about their date-not-date being ruined were washed away. Iku put her cup down and observed the rain outside. Perhaps it really was beautiful after all. Maybe she just had a bad impression of it.

"Don't worry," her friend began, "we can still do everything we planned on...don't forget, I have *this* umbrella." Her brown-haired friend, who looked elegant and refined, couldn't help but laugh. A parasol wasn't supposed to stop rain! It was supposed to protect you from the sun. Right? The mascara and violet eye shadow emphasized her brownish black eyes, combined with lip gloss, with its dark tint shimmering on her lips. Her features were emphasized, bringing out her nature feminine nature. However, unlike Iku, she wasn't a tomboy at heart. Instead, she was *more* attractive, *more* beautiful, *more* adorable. She wanted to do all she could to help Iku's budding romance with Dojo, which she found sweet. She could *almost* swoon over it. She'd always thought they were right for one another.

The rain seemed to let up. "Let's go!" she exclaimed, grabbing Iku, quickly pulling her up. It was so quick that she could barely pull herself together. Asako put money on the table, enough to cover the amount. Unlike some other parts of the world, the service charge was part of the bill. People didn't give tips. In fact, those who gave tips were looked down upon as committing a social evil. Iku had never see Asako so happy, as she felt so reserved sometimes, so dedicated to her job. She really was cutting loose. She didn't have any secrets to hide, but she couldn't ask like this around other employees.

They made their way into the shopping mall and just in time. The rain began pouring down again, hitting the mall's clear glass roof. It had been designed to be open so it could let in light from the outside. As they went into a clothing store, they walked past winter clothing, like pairs of gloves, until they came across a set of scarves. One happened to be Dojo's favorite color. "I'll get this one for him!" Iku chirped. Asako smiled, not with an enigmatic expression but one of joy. She couldn't be happier for her friend. Perhaps she could have gotten him new combat boots or something else instead. Even so, this seemed like a better gift for this season, as it was cold and rainy outside.

With another break in the rain, Iku and Asako made their way to one final place: the local park. Due to the weather, there were very few in attendance. If people had seen them together, they may have thought they were a couple. Such people couldn't be more wrong. While being paired together had not been a thought by either one of them, they were glad it had happened. Their friendship had strengthened over time. She felt *safe* with her, able to bring down her walls, and not hide who she was. Surely she flaunted her beauty and radiance all the time. With Iku, she could *almost* show off.

Iku or Asako could go out whenever they wanted and with whoever they wanted. Each one had a man they had feelings for. For Asako, it was a man named Hikaru Tezuka. For Iku, it was Atsushi Dojo. They were both part of the LDF, like them. Neither one had begun dating the men they liked. Even so, they certainly talked about their feelings for these men from time to time. Some called Asako an "enigma." That wasn't accurate. Instead, she was a smart woman who could hold her own. Some men didn't like that. Some men liked her because of her looks. She *hated* those kind of men. She saw them as disgusting trash. Despite that, she saw men who acted more respectful as fine and without issue.

The emotional connection between Iko and Asako was flexible and with clear boundaries. They'd never use terms like "zucchinis," used by some in relationships similar to what they had to refer to each other without using the word "friend" or the term "partner." The latter suggested a romantic or sexual element. There may have been some level of attraction, on a certain level. If so, it was non-romantic and non-sexual. There was the false idea that infatuation and love were tied to lust or romance. That was wrongheaded. The deep friendship of Iku and Asako went beyond the so-called "normal" or social acceptance for people would see platonic or romantic. It did not fit any traditional ideas in the slightest.

For Iku and Asako, their connection did not stop either one from beginning romantic relationships with men like Dojo or Tezuka. Their connection was monogamous rather than polyamorous. They had never even thought about the latter. Who else would they be with in such a relationship? Even so, they had a desire to be together. Each one felt confident in their sexual or gender identities, although there was always the possibility that something could disrupt their understanding. Regardless, they clearly had a close emotional connection and did not mind breaking social norms. They only called each other friends, rather than life-partners or partners, to eschew any possible misunderstandings.

Some might have believed that their relationship indicated they were dating. If someone found out and said that to them, they'd surely laugh it off. They deeply, and mutually, supported one another. However, there were no commitments to one another resembling shared finances or anything similar. On the other hand, they lived together. It was an open question as to how much freedom and independence they had as LDF members. Iku and Asako did not have an exclusive relationship, nor did they need to prioritize this over any possible romantic relationships. At the same time, they were open and vulnerable with one another in ways they weren't with others.

Everyone experiences these kinds of relationships differently. Perhaps what they had was "non-typical" and not "normal." That did not bother Iku nor Asako. They wanted to keep it private. If it got out, it could mean that their male coworkers in the LDF could become jealous or cause them to be pulled apart, reassigned to different divisions. Maybe they'd tell their possible romantic partners about this, but they hadn't decided that yet. They didn't want any messiness. Neither one of them had gone as far to question relationship hierarchies. People elsewhere, in different situations, would likely do so, without having as many limits.

As they continued chattering away, Iku turned to her friend. "Do you want to go back?" Asako nodded. They walked back, laughing along the way, skipping through the puddles, and having a fun time together, something neither one had expected would happen. It wasn't clear that this experience would actually prepare either one of them for dates with the men they

loved. That was okay. Their experience together that wonderful day would certainly change each of their lives in their own ways neither one could have ever expected...

End Notes

I decided this fic should be rated Teen and Up or General Audiences, after reading this discussion. If you think it should have been General Audiences instead, feel free let me know in a comment.

In my end note for "First Time for Everything?: Asako, Iko, and Their Affections," I said that Asako and Iko were not yet in a womance, referring to a close, but non-sexual and strong, relationship between women, with deep and meaningful connections, a tight-knit bond, appreciation, camaraderie, solidarity, female bonding, and possibly sisterhood, with two women seeing themselves as kindred spirits or soul sisters. I also said they were only beginning as queerplatonic, referring to emotional and physical intimacy between two or more individuals while they remain friends, and have outside romantic relationships, even if those involved consider themselves soulmates, which is not romantic and usually not sexual, with a stronger emotional bond than usually in friendship. With this date-not-date, their queerplatonic relationship (QPR) is moving forward leaps and bounds.

The LGBTQIA+ Wiki has a good definition of QPR, saying such relationships often have characteristics that people usually associate with romantic relationships, such as "deep emotional intimacy, prioritization, and commitment." However QPRs d not easily fall into what is typically seen as "romantic" or "platonic." QPR, according to the Wiki, remains flexible, with each relationship "tailored to the needs of the individuals involved," without any societal guidelines or expectations. Such relationships are non-sexual but not necessarily non-physical, meaning that QPR partners "may engage in physical intimacy, such as hugging, kissing, and holding hands" without this becoming sexual, or moving toward sexual activity. At the same time, physical intimacy of any kind isn't required or expected in QPR. Although relatively uncommon, QPR can, at times, "involve sex or sexual elements" as it depends on the boundaries set by QPR partners. The Wiki further says that even though QPR typically involves those along the asexual and/or aromantic spectra, it can involve those of any romantic/sexual orientation or gender. Some cisgender and heterosexual people may call these relationship "quasiplatonic" rather than queerplatonic, since the word queer is associated with those in the LGBTQ+ community, and this term can also be used when a QPR includes sexual associations, since QPR usually refers to a "strict lack of sexual involvement." The page also says that QPR partners sometimes call each other by the term "zucchinis" rather than saying they are friends, as that downplays intimacy, or using the word "partners" as that suggests "a romantic or sexual relationship." This same page states that a squish refers to a platonic or aromantic crush and describes "non-romantic and non-sexual feelings of attraction...highlight[ing] that love and infatuation are not necessarily tied to romance or lust." Some of what I said in this paragraph was adapted into the fic itself.

As the LGBTQIA+ Wiki says, a QPR can either look like a close friendship or resemble a romantic relationship, including "hand-holding, cuddling, kissing, or having sex." Some QPR couples can even be married queerplatonically. Surely, the fic "A Brilliant Plan" is a good one, and I enjoyed reading it, but sadly it could not be an inspiration for this fic. The same goes for the fic "Hikaru Tezuka's "type"." Again, it is a very well-constructed and executed

fic, and it was a slight inspiration but not enough to add it to the inspiration section. This fic was also somewhat inspired by the wording of the rules of the QPR subreddit.

Sadly, on April 17th, this fic, and over 30 others, were removed from that femslash fanfc site, when I was sadly perma-banned for mishandling interactions with a few users, despite apologizing to those users, removing certain passages of fics, and apologizing to the Sunset admin (and others). As such, I would strongly recommend **against** *anyone* joining that site, or Superlove. Both admins (Melo/Kat for Superlove, Agnes for Sunset) are friends with each other. Those admins are very particular and not in a good way. I find the whole circumstance deeply unfortunate. I wish it could have been resolved a much better way.

Works inspired by this one

The Librarian Tribunal Comes to Trolberg: Kaisa, Insidious Book Censors, and What Matters by lefemmerouge

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!